

SAOL Project Presents



Part one of our 20th Anniversary
Poetry Project

Chicken Soup for the SAOL

2015



www.saolproject.ie

SAOL Haiku

A group of wise women
Gathered with care,
Helping, healing sisterhood.

Welcome and Join in!

As was stated at the start of the last book of poetry, the SAOL Project has always used and explored culture – poetry, music, painting, sculpture, photography, drama – to work with our participants on reflecting and expressing their life experiences, their fears and hopes, their solidarity with others, and their journeys towards recovery from addiction. So here is the evidence that we continue to do this work!

This time, however, it is at the start of a process rather than the end of one. This year, 2015, marks the 20th Anniversary of the opening of SAOL. To celebrate this wonderful achievement, we have decided to compile a unique book of poetry. We are inviting poets who have worked with SAOL to share their work with us and join with the poetry and verse of the women of SAOL, in order to produce a work that will fully integrate the pieces together.

In SAOL, we are not trained poets. What we lack in literary skill we make up for in ‘sheer neck’. We write and expect people to find it interesting! We want our work to be integrated with the work of the people who honour the idea of SAOL and with the work of the people who work with us.

The aim for ‘Chicken Soup for the SAOL’ is to create a book of nourishing poems that will warm the cockles of your heart while also feeding your soul. All flavours will be present.

This ‘phase one’ is a marker for the project. The women of SAOL have laid down a gauntlet to those who work with us. Now, they ask, write with us. And put your name in the contents page along with us.

We are honoured that the first person to do that is Rita Ann Higgins. Her powerful words guide this first collection. They reflect on the hidden world of domestic abuse that effects many women in addiction and is an issue that SAOL has been working hard to shine a light upon. This first poem offers great hope for our anniversary project. I am sure it will inspire many others to join in so that we have ‘Chicken Soup for the SAOL’ ready for our 20th Birthday in October 2015!

Gary Broderick,
Director, SAOL Project

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Mirage

At least she had the egg money
and no one was going to get
their paws on that.
She would not
have been so guarded,
if he had spilled
a thimbleful of nice
in her direction ever.
But no, from day one
the toughness was there.
His dry lips frightened her,
she knew that he had
not spoken to anyone
for hours, maybe days.

Now it was her turn
to hear the barb of his roll call.
Off he went down Resentment Drive
and he let her have it -
about how sorry he was
the day he ever laid eyes
on this no-good-good-for-nothing,
who couldn't even
boil an egg.

And if she heard it
often enough, and she did,
she began to believe it
and it made her smaller.
Her shrinkage
was slow to start
but in the end
she felt like
a speck of dirt
a flick of ash
or something in front
of the eye.

Rita Ann Higgins

The Bridge

It brings the sundered town together
One great side to the other
North and South and East and West
Named for brave Rosie, one of the best.

Nineteen thirteen was a courageous year
She fought the bosses - no fright or fear
A working class woman, fair of face
With swinging skirts, so full of grace.

Long march from Jacobs to the Liffey wall
With neither a falter nor 'ere a fall
From the given task of a fight for rights
To raise her class to greater heights

A fair day's pay for fair day's work
Demanding rights, she did not shirk
For jobs and housing and medical care
A right to exist and obtain a fair share

Think well on those women for yester-year
All those who struggled to relieve our fear
Oppression, depression, and knowing your place
As dictated by those who set our pace.

Feel now the strength that bears the train forth
As you cross on her bridge bearing south or north,
And know that such strength was in one woman's wit,
She changed our life's story; she was Rosie Hackett

A poetic collaboration of the SAOL Women's History Group

Chicken Soup for the SAOL

Choices made,
Hopes dashed
I'm afraid.
Continue on
Kicking forward,
Each battle
Never ends.
Smiling faces,
Outspoken voices
Understandings lost.
Problems remaining
Fearful glances,
Opinions dancing,
Righteous attitudes
Thinking overload,
Hearing nothing,
Everyone hurting
Stop, timewasting
Attitudes constructed
Opportunities created
Life changes.

Poverty in Dublin

The politician on the box with the scratch in her voice
Explains that she's standing by her principles and has made the brave choice
And tells us that she's stopped the dole from being cut
Ah, well, that's great; that's gonna' get me outta this rut

Now I'm not complaining but my little one has asthma and ADHD
The older one has mood swings and needs 'speech and language therapy'
And the eldest won't leave the house, some kind of teenage stress
And my husband can't get a job, he's got the wrong address.

And so he drinks a lot and gambles more
And sometimes, when it's bad, he hits me before he hits the floor
And the oldest screams and rocks on his chair
While the youngest wheezes and pulls at his hair

Sitting in queues is how I spend me day
Filling in complicated forms until me hair turns grey
I have a PPS and a DOB and a next of kin who's a head-wrecker
And if she asks me one more time why I'm not working I'm gonna' deck her

Mrs, I had dreams of being a secretary when I grow up
With me long legs and me laptop and me own coffee cup
And I'd be going on holiday, like Ibiza in May
Till I woke up one Monday, puking and in the family way.

Course, my sister works in London, though she lives on her own
And my brother is on the weed and still takes the methadone
So I'm left minding the mother, with her memory and brittle bones,
Doctor says she's grand for her age but can't be left on her own.

The rent is behind and I owe my ma, did I mention
That she keeps digging us out using most of her pension
And the school trips are coming, so much for free education
Those young ones are lucky with their 'forced emigration'

And I used to go next door if I needed a cup of sugar,
Things changed since he lost his job, now we don't really talk to each other
She has it tough on her own, two kids, no maintenance there
Didn't he leg it to Canada with a culchie from Kildare

The St. Vincent de Paul put some food on the table
And I get nice things for the kids whenever I'm able
And I'll get a loan from the Provident when the Communion comes around
And when they're looking for payment, we won't make a sound

And my nerves are all shattered and my hair needs 'a do'
And my clothes are in tatters, I can't afford anything new
Cos my son needs new trainers and a tracksuit for school
And a new football jersey, he loves Liverpool

And do you find all the homework a bit of a curse?
See me internet is down and it makes the whole evening worse
Cos there's two of them doing homework and they have to trust to luck
Plus they're out of the loop without their Minecraft and Facebook

And he'd be some use to us if he was no use at all
Cos there's times when he's helpful and brings smiles to us all
And then we remember the good times and it makes the bad days worse
Between the unemployment and the drinking this downturn's a curse.

Ah, don't be listening to me, me ma always said I was a bit too deep
I take a few of them tablets to help get me to sleep
I won't get addicted though, I haven't the time
Someone in the family has to stay fine.

If it's rough for us, isn't it worse for others
When I see the state of some kids around about, me whole body shudders
And then the ones on the telly with no hope and no roof but a tent,
Sure you'd almost be glad to be paying your rent.

But the politicians will fix it, aren't there elections coming
So many doorstep promises, sure we won't want for nothing
A lie for a vote, always forgotten when elected
We're the poor of 2015, and the poor are never respected.

Ah, listen to me! Go on, I'll see you later, if I don't go now I'll be late,
Tell the family I was asking for them, the kids are looking great.
And if you see your woman, will you tell her from me,
That it's the poor that inherits the earth, and not the DSP.

POVERTY IS.....

Poverty is coloured red...
Red searing brain pain
Tortured mind cries Stop
Agonised thoughts seek shelter
Life hurts, love tears at my being
Help wanted! Apply chaos within
Anything sought to numb the dumb cells
As responsibility looms and dooms me to continue
The network of pain that serves as my brain
Is working on finite overload.

Today...

Today I won't use any gear.
Today I won't be controlled by the fear.



They say

They say life is a journey,
But who exactly are 'they' who say it?
Who are 'they' to pass judgement that's fit
To remark on a life that's simply misunderstood.

If I'm not mistaken,
It's you that's still taking.
Taking away chances and dreams,
Programme funding streams,
Just to fall in with the mainstream
Ideals, of what is 'normal' life?

But what you fail to recognise,
Is that within the struggles and strife,
I have changed my own life.
Obstacles faced,
Barriers conquered,
Perceptions challenged,
Walls de-constructed,
Rejection rejected.

Now, who cares what 'they' say,
It's my time to shine.

The line is fine

Mind is blown, heart is racing,
Help me not look at what I am facing,
Make me feel on top of the world, of my game,
Never thought about all the shame

Up, up, up and away, don't have to be here today
Down, down, down and crash, think I need to smoke some hash.
Up, up, up and away, don't have to pretend today,
Down, down, down even further, I think my hearts about to shatter

Up, up, up and stay, I need more than yesterday
Down, down, down very fast, I think my heads about to blast,
Up, up, up no more, I am addicted now, I have to score.
Down, down, down some more, wonder what is behind that door.

Up, up but not for long, my head is like a country and western song.
Down, down, down once more, spend all the wages on one nights score.
Down, down I have to stop, otherwise I will just drop.
Stay, stay another day,

Slow, slow, slow yourself down,
Listen to yourself its ok to be down.

Up, up, up once more there is loads of support behind that door.

My Little Miracle

He opened his big brown eyes
And oh my God I nearly died
His little tiny face
Just so proud
How did I do it?
How did I?
Without pain relief or gas
I had done it
I had survived
And my stunner, not a sound beside me, looking around,
Taking in everything he could,
Couldn't believe he was mine.
This beautiful little man,
So gorgeous and innocent,
He then became my life.
A reason to be alive and to be needed.
My saviour.
My little miracle and he was all mine.
He will always be my life and my beautiful baby boy!

Tammy

She was my family, my beautiful friend
And was loved so dearly till the very end.
So kind and loyal she'd give you her last pound,
But get on her wrong side and she'd punch you around.
A stronger girl you'd never find, loyal and fun, but what lay behind?
She fought her demons and gave up the drugs with the help from N.A and
their many hugs.
But her happy smile served to hide, a demon that was still inside.
We'll never know what went through her head that day, when she decided to
drift away.

They say a flame that burns the brightest never lasts as long,
Oh how I wish that this was wrong.

I miss your voice, your laugh, your smile.
I miss that, for your family, you'd walk the extra mile.

A guardian angel I've gained for life
To help me through life's troubles and strife.
I'm thankful for one thing though and I'm talking straight to you now.

You've lent me your strength to carry on,
Somehow.

Feelings?

Happiness,

Joy,

Pain,

Sorrow,

I wonder what way I'll be feeling tomorrow?

Guess I'll just have to wait and see

If the day dawns when I can be me

Hurt

Despair

Lost

Found

The joy when life can turn around

Mother

Daughter

Sister

Roles

My life is finally full of goals

For You, Da

Da, it's not even a year gone and yet it feels like forever.
The day I saw you lying there, I couldn't believe you were gone forever.
I still think about you every day.

The pain is harder now then it was at the start
I don't think anything can heal this broken heart.
I look at your picture and think
Of how lucky I was to get to see you before you went asleep.

Looking at you laid out
It was like looking at you asleep
You looked so peaceful and so young
I am glad you didn't suffer, but so sad because you're gone.

The thought of you being alone,
Hurts

Death is not the end,
Death can never be the end,
Death is next part of the road,

Short Sweet Love Poem

A love poem will not always be long and flowery.
Sometimes what you need to say is very short,
In fact it may be the fact that the poem is short that makes it special.
Its short length
Might show
That you put the time and effort
Into making
Every
Word
Count,
You considered carefully.
Every word a choice.
Every word a meaning behind it.
This short poem might be the ultimate act of romance.

My light from above

My life was dull and empty
I didn't know why, until one day, I watched a woman walk by.
She was pushing a pram and all I could see was a cute little smile,
Like a light shining at me.

I thought to myself, 'I wish that was me having that light shining at me'
For my life was so dull
Sometimes I couldn't even stand being me

I went on with my life, day after day not giving a fuck what I did
Or what I'd say, got into trouble and always got stoned
Until I felt a bit strange, so the doctor I phoned.
He told me to come and see him that day
He said, 'You are pregnant'. I said, 'Fuck off, no way',
I tried my best to be good and stay clean
It was hard don't get me wrong
Being clean just wasn't me.

The bigger I grew, the better I got
Then came the day that I was due to pop
So I went to the Rotunda with my little bag
I pushed and I pushed and he popped out
Fuck was I glad I took a quick glance to see
What I'd done then the nurse said to me
You have a beautiful son I looked at him
And him at me at last I had my light shining at me.

Best Friends

Best friends stick together till the end,
They are like a straight line that will not bend.

They trust each other forever.
No matter if you're apart you are together

They can be your hero and save the day.
They will never leave your side,
They are here to stay.

They help you up when you fall,
Your true friends are best of all.

My Kids

I wish I could be with my kids
One day it will all fly in,
And I mean it, with all my heart
Hope when we're together and never part,
As much as I can bear
This is mine and your year.
It's only another little while
That we can be together and then I can smile.

I can manage sometimes, I think this year
I do hold back, don't let out a tear
A life of regret, drugs, use just to forget
Leave my past behind me, I'm trying to move on
I keep telling myself they're not gone
In one year's time, they will be back with me
Then I will be so happy
I'll get you back just wait and see
I'm going to say goodbye today,
Tonight I make sure for you I pray.

Talk to Me

Sitting in a room surrounded by tons of people,
But hearing only your own thoughts makes you feeble.

Self-expression, tears and emotions,
Fuck this I'll just go through the motions.

Everything will be ok, I'm here, talk to me.
Nah, I'm alright I think I'll just let it be.

It's hard to talk when you don't know what's wrong?
Maybe I've been depressed for far too long.

How do I get out of this hole I'm in?
No hope, No vision,
Trapped in my own personal prison.

I can see the light and I know what to do.....
But God, that's something I can't undo.

I wish I had done something about these feeling in the past,
But unfortunately the flag is now at half-mast.
I need to forgive those things in my past
And embrace the change that is here at last.

Bless all who SAOL in her

Anchored near Dublin Dockside
Not far from the sea
SAOL's light shines
For those in darkness to see

Her masts stands tall
A beacon to those on stormy seas
She provides a safe haven
For the crew and her sisters.

The dark alleys that surround her see suffering and pain
Yet compassion and strength offer hope and renewal again.

Her gangplank is lowered
Her portholes are always open
Just take your first step on board
And your new journey begins

Isolation and loneliness
Can be parked on dry land
For the few hours you're on board
There is love and support at hand.

Sisters look out for SAOL's light
With hope and pride in your hearts
SAOL's Captain and crew
Will guide you from the start

Bless all who SAOL in her.

Adrienne O' Connor

Bad Good Things

Too much of a bad thing
Is never a good thing
But then when there is too much of a bad thing
Surely it's a good thing that we let it out?
But then, I'm sadder now that I've let it out
Than when I was keeping it in
And that can't be a good thing?
But it is a good thing that I can feel it.
A bad thing that I have to feel it.
But good that I'm able.
Bad luck that this is my life.
Good that I know how bad it is.
Mad that, that it's good that I know how bad I have it.
In bad days, I never had it good but I didn't know it.
But that's recovery
Getting good things from too much of a bad thing

2015

Another new year begins,
A new chapter awaits for us all,
And more chances to learn something new,
Maybe even gain a different view,
Let's face it
Life's not without its troubles and daily struggles,
But always remember you will get by
It takes just one step at a time.
The first step is in the decision to try,
Just look at how far you've already come.
So wave goodbye to 2014,
Just simply, 'let it go, let it go'
The world is waiting for you,
To seize the day,
Hold on to hope,
You can cope.
Not every day is a good day,
But there is good in every day.

Bobby

When I started the gear
I was too young to know the dark places it would make me go.
It took away my family and friends;
Security was gone, so I turned to it for company.

It made me feel safe,
It made me forget but after years of this shit all I crave is death.
When it first gets its grip on you it makes you feel happy
Until one day you realise everything in your life is just crappy.
It makes you forget the good as well as the bad
Although it's a painkiller it makes you feel sad.
It takes you into a different world;
Your old life seems absurd.
It takes away everything that makes you 'You'
And it draws you to it as if it were glue.
You've fallen so deep into the chaotic life
All it brings is trouble and strife.
You crave it
You hate it.
Try to beat it and break it.
You wonder if you'll ever win?
Should you stop fighting and just give in?
But you have to remember it's not only you,
When you're strung out those who love you suffer too.
SO when you feel that the gears worth more than you,
Stop and think of what you're putting others through.

The Hangover Sufferer's Prayer

Oh holy God
My banging head!
Ohhhh, do me a favour lord,
Strike me dead.
I look to those with bloodshot eyes
For I did OVER Socialise,
Yes fall from grace last night,
Last night did I,
And drank and drank Lord, the whole pub dry,
And now my mouth taste like a sewer
And my lucid moments get fewer and fewer

Oh hear me dear Lord, as I pray for a cure,
And a way to resist the drink and its lure
And I will never, ever, ever, drink again
Swear by the power of God,
Amen

Before You Pass Judgement

Before You Pass Judgement

Look through my eyes

What do you see?

A ravaged replica, a faded image

Of a girl who was once me.

Listen with my ears

What do you hear?

Fights and sirens in the city

Dark shadows crying out for some gear.

Let my hands become yours

What do they touch?

Stone cold statues beside you

In doorways of banks that have too much.

Eat with my mouth

What do you taste?

Decayed teeth and bleeding gums

A river of toxic waste?

Examine my heart

Is it beating in time?

Made of stone, turned to ice

Or just hardened by the grime?

Walk in my shoes

How far would you get?

Would you carry my burdens?

Or cast them aside and forget?

Please wear them sometimes

And keep me in mind

Because I am not invisible

And you are not blind.

Child

I brought you up since you were small
And now you are so very tall.

Where once our love and bond was strong
It's broken now, I don't know what went wrong

I miss your smile and beautiful face.
I'm all caught up in this rat race.

But know this still your mother I am
My heart is open and love still there

Until the day when you come back
And life will be back to the cracker jack.

Love ya, Kid!

A Mother's Love

A mother I love being
And my son I love seeing
My baby boy is so like me
He's always so happy and full of glee

I love him so much
And love the feel of his touch
I love him to the stars in the sky so black
I love him to the moon and back.

Snow

I love the snow, when it's falling down
It looks like magic all white like a gem.
It can turn a derelict building into a palace.
Making snowmen and angels in it
It feels like magic

Kids with their red noses but they are having so much fun,
They don't notice how cold it is.
It's beautiful
To just sit
And watch it falling
All sparkly and white

Alarm

I'm only going to sleep when the alarm goes off
Tossing and turning, in and out of dreams
Caught up in the duvet with the dog stuck to my legs
My daughter the other side of me,
Out for the count
Up I jump, 'Oh God, We'll be late!'
Running around
'Till I realise
It's quieter than usual,
No hustle and bustle
How can that be?

Its Saturday you see
So it's back to bed for me

Kid Free Day

A day to myself
Now what will I do?
Get my hair and my nails done?
No wait...
I need to clean the loo.

No babies around
Fussing and screaming
I need a good sleep
But must do the cleaning

Bags under my eyes
And my hair is a mess
Oh what I'd give to feel good in a dress.

It's now 6pm and I get the text
The kids will be back soon
I still haven't had a rest.

And then they arrive
And the quiet slips away
Mammy did you sleep?
That will happen...someday

Winter days

I woke up this morning
And the rain was pouring
God I wish I was still snoring

I fell out of bed and shook my head
But I wish I was still curled up instead
Coats, hats, scarves and all the rest,
While my mam is still shouting
'Remember your vest!'

Dark days, dark nights
And 100 pairs of tights,
When will there ever be some light?

Eventually the spring will come
And all the rain will lift
And all the aul ones on the road will say 'Jayus isn't this a gift!'

Flowers growing, no more snowing
And finally there will be happiness flowing

With the Counsellor

'And what triggers you to think of using?'
She asked me with obvious delight
She believes I'll never get drug free
She's only asking to prove herself right

'Are there people or places, sights, sounds or things
That triggers your desire to use?'
I said, 'I only think of using, love,
When I'm up, down, busy or bored,
If I'm happy or I've got the blues.'

'But', says I, with a smile on my face
'Here's something for you to go figure.
Though everything reminds me that I want to use,
It's a session with you that pulls the trigger'.

Hostel Paranoia

I've stayed in a hostel since Thursday night.
It's funny no matter where I stay,
I end up in bother.
I shared a room on Tuesday night
With an elderly lady.
She got so freaked out
It gave me a fright, paranoia.
She was ranting and raving at me.
Then she left and called a taxi
And was gone that night.
Paranoia is a horrible thing to go through.
I know this because
I feel that way regularly.
You think everybody is against you
Or looking for a fight.
But beware sometimes you might be right
I feel sorry for the lady I never got her name
But I'm glad she left.
Why you ask?
Because if she misplaced anything
I would have got the blame.
Paranoia.

My Dad

Dad you are so good to me
You're always happy and full of glee
You always buy me gifts
And drive me around if I need a lift.
Dad we have a lot of fun
Dad I love you, you are my sun.
I love my dad
He's never one bit sad
He comes on walks with me everyday
I love him so much in every way
Dad you are the best
Life's great having you on my side
I love you, da,
You are my anchor and my guide.

Don't Give In

Take a puff not once but twice
Go on, go on it will be nice
It's just one line they say
You won't get strung out, no way
Puff and puff, don't miss a spot
But mind your fingers it can be hot
Has the buzz hit you yet?
Don't tell anyone we even met
Has the buzz gone to your head?
It's a great feeling, so they said
Why don't you try some crack?
No, I replied, I'd receive a smack
What about a pill they said?
No, no way I'd end up in bed
Would you like a bottle of wine?
No one was drinking it, it's only mine
No I replied again and again
Leave me alone you're not my friend.

Fucking Depression

You come into my life without an invite
You have me sitting up on my bed
Wishing that I would rather be dead.
Well, you won't get the better of me
For I could be like Moses and part the Red Sea
So now you know of my will-power,
It comes from within and even higher
With support from my family and friends,
They will help me get through this
So fucking depression take a hike
And you're away on your bike.

Sometimes...

Sometimes I feel very alone.
In a room full of people, I crouch on my own.
I don't know what it is that sets me apart,
all I know is that it breaks my heart.

Sometimes I think I must be insane.
I can't seem to understand my own brain.
It tells me I'm useless, stupid and shit.
Then berates me to just get on with it.

Sometimes I feel like I just want to die,
I'm so empty inside I can't even cry.
But then...

Sometimes I stop and feel my feet on the ground
And realise I won't stay this down.
I have people who love me and friends that care.
I won't let my life be ruled by despair.

Until death do us part

Hey stop, don't ignore me, I'll get louder and louder, don't you see?
Listen it's me knocking at your door, open it,
Outside is everything you're looking for.
What, you think you can finish with me?
I've owned you for years, don't you see?
Why make this hard?
You know I'll come back, I've always been here for you, isn't that a fact?
When everyone you loved let you down
I came to the rescue so you wouldn't drown.
Do you really think I'll go away?
I own you remember, I'll force you to stay.
Hey, stop don't ignore me, I'll get louder and louder,
You belong to me.
I'm not in the habit of giving up,
You know this, so why all the fuss?
So you think, 'I'll take a few tablets and just go to bed'.
Ha, don't you know I live in your head?
Haven't I always been here for you?
When you felt as though you wouldn't get through?
I set my sights on you years ago.
Why go to the trouble of dragging you in unless I knew that I could win?
So you think you've outsmarted me, do you?
You know quite well I can see right through you.
I'm not in the habit of letting go,
Until death do us part.
Then together we'll go.

My Prayer

This is a little prayer for me...

Lord, help me do what I need to do what I need to do
To change my life for the better,
Father, give me strength to do whatever is asked of me,
Help me to be willing, to do whatever it takes,
Whatever is asked of me
Lord, help me to do it with my whole heart,
Give it 100% in the name of the Father,
But when things get too tough, I feel like giving up,
Give me the strength to see my recovery through to the end.
In the name of the Father, step into my life
I need you lord, I can't change this on my own,
Please look over my daughters and family and keep them safe.
Lord, if I ever want to give up always bring them to my mind
And remind me how much I want to be the best mother to them
To make up for all the times I wasn't there for them.
Thank you Lord for everything you're doing
And going to do for me.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Bad Journey's End

I'm sick and I'm tired
I wish I was well,
I wish I felt better,
And out of all this hell.
Being ill is a pain
I've a pain in my brain,
I thought it was a dream,
But woke to the reality,
Of chest pains and low energy,
Can't think straight,
This sickness I hate,
I want out of this scene
But with hope and belief
My power will return
My confidence, I'll rebuild
And this bad journey will end.

Wish Wasting

Going through life day after day,
Just wishing,
Each one away.
Sick of being bored,
Not moving forward,
When you're young
You want to be older,
When you're old
You want to be younger,
Everything is blunder!
Happiness desired
Something gnawing
Wishing for things we don't have and may never
It's really the biggest waste of time ever

Social Workers

Feeling lost and betrayed
So much anger and remorse
So drained, tablets, tablets
Always on my brain

Sometimes I feel like I'm going insane.
Now I've two kids,
"Oh what a shame"
"Whisper, whisper, whisper"
"She's all to blame".

Social workers, social workers,
What's the bleeding game?
Always talking about, "What's for the best?"
With me left trying to explain,

But how would she know,
She's no kids to show.
Made feel like a monster
That belongs on death row.

So what to do now?
I think I might know
Get into rehab, give them no ammo,
And until then, lay low.

Saol Sisters

Standing strong,
Avoiding the unwanted
Observing the people around me
Loving my sisters

Supports for the
Inspiring young woman
Successful in their life
Trusting
Easy going
Real life
Saol is a great place to be

Life

One day I will fly away,
Just close my eyes.

But then I realise,
Life is for living,
It's not about the taking,
It's more about the giving.

Week by week I'm feeling better
Until the Probation service sends a letter,
I don't know how much I can take,
Trying to sleep at night but lying awake.
Back to the 'Joy, I go,
Will I get T.R.? I don't know,
So I'm off to court,
Without any support.
18 months the judge says.
Oh, I want to run away,
Off I go to the cell
My idea of hell.

Every day I pray,
For my fears to be taken away,
God can you hear me,
Answer my prayers,
Let me be free!

Better

I have to write a poem,
But I'd rather be at home,
I'm very tired today,
I'd love to float away.
I want my big bed,
But I'm here instead,

I really do love my class,
It's like a blast in a glass.

So it's time to go,
Walking in the snow,
When will I get home?
I don't really know
One thing I do know,
I'm happier being here
Happier than last year,
So give me a big cheer!

To my Saol Sisters

To the Saol sisters I've recently received,
I say this with the greatest of ease
Your kind words the day that I joined,
Made me come back for a second time.

I wondered what you wanted from me,
But all that was said was take a seat if you please,
I said to myself 'they're after something'
Because if you've run with dealers like I have
You'll always pay with trouble and sleaze,

But nothing was asked, a lot was gained.
For this I thank you again and again.
Each of you have your own piece of hell,
But you still have time for a smile,
And a loving, "Are you keeping well"?

For this I will always be grateful.
And I really want to tell you that,
You are all doing so well,
So keep up what's working for you,
And maybe one day the sun will shine through,

So I'll leave it at that and say it again,
I'm blessed with my sisters,
I was going through hell.
But thanks to you all I am now feeling well

Our Day Will Come

We all have a mammy, of this I am sure,
The day I was born, I was really blessed with her,
The life I have lived, through no fault but my own,
She blames herself just because she left home.
It had nothing to do with that, I promise her that,
It was people and places and being a bit of a curious cat,
That brought me down, simple just like that,

She is so loving and very kind,
I can't believe I let her down time after time,
She never stopped loving me or turned away,
She lies awake with worry,
And even went to the Lourdes to pray,

But I promise you mammy, I'll get myself clean,
With the help from Saol and all that they give,
You will have your daughter back, this promise I give,
With the fullest of heart because
I want to show you my time hasn't passed.

I will be clean and make you proud,
And then we can walk back with the crowd
I thank you so much for all that you've done,
And I really do promise, our day will come.

Waiting Room

Sorry, have you the right time?
Really? Thought it was later.
More rain.
I suppose we complained about it often enough,
Now we're being feckin' charged for it!
Still, save the environment.
Mind you, all the trees they're cutting down to send out the water bills
We'll probably end up with Bangladeshi mudslides
What time was it?
This phone always leaves you guessing.
Don't know what they have that on for
Feckin' depressing
Another Euro crisis
Come 'round my house of a Tuesday
And they'll know what a Euro feckin' crisis is
Only watch it to see if anyone waves from behind the reporter
He's much shorter in real life, you know?
More interesting watching the security cameras,
At least then you might see someone you know.
Oh, sorry, text message, excuse me a minute.
Free texts and calls if I buy more credit. Fuck sake!
They must think we're stupid.
Oh, I love this ad, fecking hilarious.
I think I'll get a coffee, do you want one?
No. Won't bother meself.
Ah, maybe I will. Have you change of a fiver?
I'll bet you have. There's always more there than you think
Until you really need it and then there's never enough
Them 1 cent coins do me head in.
I'm gonna save up seventy nine thousand, nine hundred of them
And buy an iPhone!
Can't wait to see yer one's face when I walk in with six buckets of coins
It's legal tender, get over yerself love,
Ah, you're alright, €4.90 is near enough
Bet they make a killing selling this shit.
How's a Latte different from a Cappuccino when it comes out of a machine?
Ah, Jaysus, I forgot the sugar.
Bitter as shite and watery as fuck
I'm not drinking this muck.
Do you want this? I only had a sip.

Suit yourself; shame to see it go to waste.
Still raining.
Good luck then, sure I'll see you again.
How're you, love? Do you know what time it is?
I think yer man's phone was on the blink, I didn't want to say.
Is it really? He was right so.
Time goes slow when you're having fun, wha?
How many squares do you think there are from one side of the room to the other?
Is my foot bigger than one of them squares?
Yer woman there looks like she's in the horrors.
Wouldn't like to be at the end of that call!
I need a shave.
No, love, go on ahead there. I'm waiting for someone to get back to me.
Ring the bell at the side and someone will come.
Tell them you have an appointment or you'll be left here waiting.
Me? Ages – what time is it now?
Ah, well then, not that long yet, I suppose.
Feels longer.

Sunny Kids

Kids live and laugh and love and play
And skip round and round you every day.
They are so much fun to be around
They show you how to touch the sky with both feet on the ground
Kids are alive in so many ways
They blind you with delight like summer sun rays
There's nowhere else I'd choose to be
Than around the kids of my family
Naturally happy, so funny, full of glee
They show me how I really want to be

No Giving Out!

We give out when our kids are bold running around,
Not doing what they're told.
It's the stress of life that has us this way,
We've forgotten how to laugh and play.

So the next time your children are driving you mad,
Don't scream or shout at them.
This makes them feel sad
In the end you'll only feel bad.

All they want to do is laugh and play,
And have fun with you,
When you were a child
That's all you did too.

57 Channels and Nothing's Wrong?

We complain when our tea gets cold,
We complain when we start looking old.
We complain when the rain falls and the weatherman never said,
We complain when our favourite character ends up dead.
But what the hell are we moaning for.

Change the channel and you will see people that look like you
Do you think they'd care if the soap star dies?
They don't even have a roof or a bed or a spare pair of shoes.

So the next time you're eating your calorie-counted food,
Think of your neighbours who can't count on having any food
Change the channel, look again
But don't get angry at yourself, get angry at the man.
The governments of the world should put their heads back on

They're the ones who should put a new channel on
Channel 'No More', Channel 'Yes We Can', Channel 'Give it to the man'
Take a good look at the world and what the rich have done wrong.
Now broadcast the words, now sing the song

Cheers me dears

Cheer me dears,
And you can fuck right off with your happy new years
Fear and tears
Washed down with a few cans of low priced Aldi beers
Drinking them with a greedy fuck with sticky out ears
Watching Top Gear
(on the BBC not the howl of the dealers on Amiens Street)
Wishing it was right here
So near I can taste it
Getting wasted
Oh you can jeer
Cos there's nothing quite as depressing as a white Christmas
When all you want is golden brown
And a few Zimmos to wash it all down
Turkey me arse and cranberry fucking jam
You know what you can do with your honey glazed ham
When all I want is a trip to anywhere but here
Away from the fear
And the smell of bottled failure

Happy New Year?
As much as I can bear is a happy new day
Painted smile and underlay
To cover the bruises from the last display of affection
Me, walking down the road with my one true glow
Holding hands and at the top of our voices singing 'Let it go, let it go'

I wish I could but I met too many snowmen
I try
But it always ends with 'ok bye'.

Cheers big ears and fuck you with your happy new years
And keep your happy new day too
I can manage an hour at a push
I'll smile and wish yous all good luck
And I'll mean it there and then
And then the fear and the tears will rush back at ya
With the need for a beer or a bottle of vodka
Becoming stronger than I ever thought possible
Makes me give in

How long am I sober?
I'm sober as a judge
I just can't stop drinking
But I never get drunk or stoned

A life of regret
Drug use just to forget

Maybe this year will be new

The Caoin

I started to scream again today
A slow sad scream of frustrated anger
Today I wailed at the wall of officialdom!
Smug, smiling, filing cabinet face
Closed to my desperate entreaty
Social justice is a right
Don't dole it out like charity
I stood there, dead-locked, mind-locked
Helpless in his sightless one dimension world
With dignity in danger, I turned and
Slowly, silently I walked away
And my mind screamed a slow, sad caoin for the Women
And damned their Patriarchy

Poetry Writing

Write a poem he says,
It can be about anything, anything at all
But what you fail to see
Is in fact I know nothing, nothing at all.

Mind goes blank, thought no longer lingers.
The pen seems useless within my fingers.

Then out of the blue,
Creeps in something new,
The words start spilling out onto the page,
Suddenly, poetry writing is all the rage.

The Man in Black

He was an amazing musician; Bono eat your heart out. Always singing, smiling and playing away but he woke up one morning and had lost his way. Fear, depression and 'madness' caught up with him and the poor lad lost his identity. "You're bi-polar" the doctors said and he gained a title. That's when the paranoia kicked in. His smiles and laughter turned to a permanent stare at the floor, constantly in a trance listening to the voices in his head.

"Hello John....John....Hello".

"Oh, eh, eh, hello there."

Back into his gaze. As the days passed, same stare, same clothes, same look of fear in his eyes.

One day he never turned up. Worry set in. Phone calls unanswered; our minds went to the worst. We eventually found him, fully clothed, hats and boots on, him standing in a freezing cold shower. No response just a catatonic state of trance.

And the worst thing of all, speaking to him in hospital he had convinced himself that his life was perfect.

Seriously? That's gas!

I'll come back to you in a few days. Yeah?

I'd give anything to live in his head for a day. Feel the fear, anxiety and paranoia about everyday life. Going to the shops is a struggle, public transport forget about it...isn't that a scary thought?

His fear of medication is making the rediscovery of his identity very difficult. The poor man is full of loneliness, pain and fear.

And here we are worrying about having our nails done.

Nanna's House

My nanny's was always my safe place. When I was in her house I could relax, be myself, be a kid. I remember when things would kick off badly at home, I'd pray that I'd get sent to Nanna's. When I got to stay for weeks I'd be a different person. I remember always being cosy and happy and always feeling loved. I would try and pretend that I lived there and that 'home' didn't exist. Until I'd see my Ma walk up the driveway, head down, shoulders slumped. I'd dread her coming into the house. When she'd come in, the house would no longer be cosy; she brought with her the coldness and sadness.

Automatically my shoulders would slump and I'd try and make myself as small as possible, hoping, wishing that I could become invisible and she'd just go.

The way I'm talking you'd think that I didn't love her. I did but she'd bring me back there to him and I'd have to go back to the person I had to be that house. Always alert, scared, watching my back. Having to watch my Ma become like a scared animal rather than the beautiful mother I knew she could be, that I'd seen her be.

I'd sit in my nanny's cosy kitchen while they had a hushed conversation, praying to God she'd leave and not come back. I'd mourn her of course, I loved her but if she couldn't be free, she should let me be.

Before I know it, she's beside me, telling me we were going 'home'. I see her face now more clearly. Her eyes are red from crying and black from him. Her nose looks crooked and there are bald patches on her head. I do what I'm told and pack up my stuff. Before I go, I hug Nanna. I squeeze her as hard as I can to get some of her warmth and love inside me so that I might stay happy a little longer.

I'm told to hurry up, my nanna rubs my hair and tells me, she'll see me soon 'please God'. Please God is right because now I'm scared. As I walk down the garden path with my Ma walking unsteadily beside me. I'm cold again and sad. I put up my shield and hope that someday I will be free.